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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0018  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 3144  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 3162  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6048  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2346  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 3805  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 8086  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 6463  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0238  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2685  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1282  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 1005  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 1973  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 2033  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0248  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 2718  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8824  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
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RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000736

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2016  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IN](#) [BT](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: BHUTANESE AMBASSADOR, CITING FEAR OF MAOISTS,  
BACKTRACKS ON REPATRIATION OF CATEGORY 1 AND 4 REFUGEES

REF: A. STATE 6081  
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 555

Classified By: Ambassador David C. Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) The Government of Bhutan is focusing on Bhutan's constitutional process and may not have time to address the refugee issue, Bhutanese Ambassador Tshering told PRM/A Director Rusch and Poloff on January 31. During the meeting, in which Rusch reiterated points in Ref. A, Tshering stated that the RGOB is reassessing its priorities, adding that allowing any refugees to return at this sensitive juncture in the country's political development may not be in the national interest of the country.

[1](#)2. (C) Tshering once again reiterated comments from Ref. B, noting that Bhutan is more focused on the transformation to a constitutional monarchy, yet worried about the security implications of refugee returns, and remains insistent that the GON must sign a joint statement regarding the repatriation of Category 1 and 4 refugees. Attempting to hedge, Tshering remarked the Bhutan is not withdrawing the agreement to repatriate Category 1 and 4 refugees. However, he raised further doubts about the Bhutanese commitment to the October 2004 agreement between King Wangchuck and A/S Dewey by commenting that the situation in Nepal has deteriorated and any refugee return could "kickstart" problems in Bhutan. He indicated that it is possible that the RGOB may decide not to repatriate these, or any refugees, due to security concerns Maoist agitation.

¶3. (C) Highlighting reports of a growing number of Maoist/activist groups in the camps, he noted that Bhutan cannot afford to import Maoist or other troubling ideologies into "such a small country." Asked if the RGOB intends to conduct another round of screening of the Category 1 and 4 refugees to ensure such troublemakers do not return, Tshering simply said no, suggesting that none of the refugees would be allowed to return. Noting that the USG could accept tens of thousands of refugees over the next five years, and that other countries would also likely join the resettlement efforts, Rusch indicated that Thimphu only needed to accept the small group of refugees already deemed to be Bhutanese citizens in order to get the process moving. Tshering replied that the message from Thimphu is that security concerns are paramount and may trump any return of refugees.

¶4. (C) Noting the state of Maoist insurrection in Nepal and the delicate nature of the King's task to seek his peoples' approval for the constitution, Tshering -- a hawk and former interior minister -- made the national security point that now is not the time to permit Maoists to infiltrate the heretofore stable and peaceful Bhutan.

Comment  
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¶5. (C) Tshering's comments were more pointed than during previous interactions and could indicate a change in policy by the RGOB. Septel reports a discussion with Indian Foreign Secretary Saran in which he stated that New Delhi has not/not

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gotten the impression in its interactions with Thimphu that

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the RGOB is trying to break out of the repatriation deal. Still our recent attempts to convince Tshering that the immediate repatriation of Category 1 and 4 refugees could be the first step in ending the refugee problem, and likely result in large-scale third country resettlement, have fallen on deaf ears. One idea to break the logjam might be a multilateral delegation of interested countries to call on Bhutanese Foreign Minister Wangchuk and the King in Thimphu at the earliest opportunity to determine if the message delivered by Tshering is indeed that of the RGOB and to demonstrate international commitment to resolve the problem. This visit would carry more weight if each of the interested parties was prepared to join the US in committing to accept a specific number of refugees.

¶6. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:  
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)  
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